(in tonnes)

Season	Production	Domestic Consumption	Export
1995-96	225,000	75,000	1,50,000
1996-97	242,000	80,650	1,61,350
1997-98	260,000	86,650	1,73,350
1998-99	280,000	93,350	1,86,650
999-2000	300,000	1,00,000	2,00,000

Forum of Indian ocean Nations

5114. SHRI G. Y. KRISHANAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Indian Ocean nations agree on forum" appearing in "The Observer of Business and Politics", New Delhi dated 5th April, 1995;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein; and

(c) how far the proposed RIM trade will benefit India and in what spheres of exports of Indian products and imports from the Indian Ocean nations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The first meeting launching the Indian Ocean Rim Initative for Regional Economic Cooperation was held in Mauritius from 29—31 March, 1995. Apart from India countries invited by the Government of Mauritius to the meeting were Australia, Kenya, Oman, Singapore and South Africa. The meeting agreed on certain fundamentals of Indian Ocean Rim Regional Cooperation in adopting principles and objectives of identifying the scope of activities. The focus of cooperation is to be economic and will cover the areas of trade, investment, infrastructure, tourism, science & technology and human resource development. The meeting in Mauritius set up a Working Group which would formulate ideas and proposals to achieve objectives and advance implementation of the activities identified by it. An Intergovernmental Meeting to be convened by Mauritius within twelve months would consider the report of the working Group.

(c) While increase in intra-regional trade among the participating countries is generally expected to benefit these countries, it is too early to make an assessment of the quantum of benefit to India.

Cooperation between Tobacco Board and CTRI

5115. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tobacco Board is working closely with CTRI Rajahmundry to pass on the benefits of latest research to farmers in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, details of cooperation initiated by the Tobacco Board with CTRI; and

(c) what benefits have accrued to tobacco farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Some specific areas of collaboration include:

(i) Distribution through the Tobacco Board of pure seeds produced by CTRI to commercial nurseries and growers;

(ii) Distribution to FCV tobacco growers of pure and healthy seedlings produced in CTRI farms;

(iii) Dissemination by the Tobacco Board of the latest research findings of CTRI to growers by conducting training programmes, video shows, study tours and on farm trials.

(c) These extension activities benefit the farmer by providing seeds/seedling of high yeilding disease resistant varieties of FCV/burley tobacco, imparting training and exposure to latest research findings in the area of tobacco cultivation.

Threat Posted by Sri Lanka to Indian in European Tea Market

5116. SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sri Lanka is posing a seritus threat to India in the European tea market; and

(b) if so, what steps have been or are being taken to meet this threat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Sri Lanka is a traditional competitor of India in the international tea market. There is, however, no serious threat to the Indian tea from Sri Lanka in the European market;

In order to improve our market share in Europe, promotional capaigns for Indian tea are undertaken from time to time through Tea Board's offices at London and Brussels. Steps taken in this direction include participation in trade fairs|exhibitions; media capaign to increase consumer awareness towards various unique characteristics of Indian tea; media campaign to popularise Indian tea through Tea Board marketing symbol; and support to various foreign brands containing Indian tea. Tea Board have also undertaken brand promotion scheme to popularise classic Indian tea abroad and also have launched a Darjeeling and Assam Logo campaign in U. K.

The Govt. have also token the following measures to facilitate tea exports:-

(i) FOB sale of tea in London auctions has been allowed whereby exporters do not have to physically shift the teas to London before the actions as hitherto.

(ii) System of CIF off shore sale of Indian tea at London actions has also been approved which covers also the Europeon market.

Inclusion of Tobacco in thrust Area for Export Promotion

5117. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether tobacco will be included in the thrust area for export promotion;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) how Government propose to obtain an increasing share of the growing overseas market for tobacco?